Ethics In Social Working

Posted on October 31, 2018

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Introduction

The nature of the job undertaken by social workers involves confronting ethical dilemmas that arise routinely. The education provided to people who join the field as social workers covers the perspectives of all the practices and programs within that educational program. The council, which was built with the aim of preparing social workers, has specifically added the point that deals with ethical dilemmas and provides guidance. Decision-making is always hard to handle when ethical considerations arise. Professionals who work as social workers know the guidance, and they have to tolerate ambiguity while resolving conflicts, specifically from an ethical point of view. Ethics, values, and a code of ethics are the guiding principles that help in leading life. Values refer to beliefs that are provided by culture in terms of ethics, and the code of ethics is formally defined to provide guidance. However, as a social worker intern in the senior resource center, I dealt with ethical dilemmas, and the decisions undertaken according to ethics are discussed further.

Discussion

An ethical dilemma occurred during my internship in one of the senior resource centers while I was taking care of the meal programs that were assigned. The nature of the job as a social worker is to provide daily meals to people above 60 years of age, and the meals are prepared by the senior resource center with the help of a local catering organization. Specifically, the ethical dilemma involved analyzing and deciding on one person who had been receiving the meal for several years. The required condition deals with the rule that after every six months, it’s the duty to check whether those who are receiving the meal still meet the criteria and are eligible for the services (Congress, 2017).

The specific incident was the only one significant enough to become an ethical dilemma during the delivery of food as part of an eligibility assessment. That day, we went to the house of that person and smelled marijuana being smoked in the house. After knocking on the door, a young 18-year-old male answered the door and was clearly looking high due to the use of marijuana, with red eyes and appearing disoriented. The man who was receiving the meal was taking a nap and couldn’t come to answer, as informed by that boy. Now, it raises the question of whether providing services to the house in which marijuana is being consumed will badly affect the health of that elderly man. The ethical dilemma was whether it came under my duty to report what I had witnessed.

After going through the code of ethics as described by the National Association, especially for social workers, the well-being of the client is the duty of the social worker. There are other laws and rules that also emphasize that all social workers, even common citizens, should always look after the well-being of the people around them, especially senior citizens. Considering all these points and clauses provided by reports and laws, I was motivated enough to do something. But when working in the organization, the decisions taken by the workers affect not just the specific person to whom the decision is directed, but also the whole organization, which is at stake. In this particular case, the stakeholder who comes first and is likely to be directly affected by the decision is the client, who is the senior citizen receiving the services. The decision also involves the young man living in that house because the dilemma was raised due to his course of action. The other stakeholders will be our group, which was working on that particular task when the dilemma was raised. In the end, the organization, social services department, and police department are the groups that will also get involved as stakeholders.

Identification and analysis of all the courses of action, consideration of the stakeholders involved in the decision, and consideration of the results and the risks of those results will also be taken into account. Decisions that involve ethical dilemmas are always the hardest ones in such situations. While considering every perspective of the decisions, there are going to be three courses of action that can be taken. The first course of action was to do nothing, which means to let things happen as they are and not to confront the grandson regarding the issue. The documents that need to be made will be created normally, and the investigation will stop right there through the continuity of the service. This action will provide the client with meal services, the grandson will continue doing what he was doing, and if anything bad happens, they will use 911 for that. But the worst thing about this decision is that maybe the grandson was abusive as a result of marijuana use, and it has a negative effect on the health of the client (Ferguson, 2017).

The second decision was the opposite of the first, and that was to report what we suspected and saw during our visit. In this decision, the stakeholders involved will be the client, the young boy, and the police department, along with our organization. The positive side of this decision is that the police will force the young man to stop using marijuana, which is bad for the health of the senior citizen client. However, the worst side of this decision was that the client was displeased with what we did and reported us to our organization because it was not our duty to report to the police, as described by the job. The organization’s response was unknown, and the client stopped using the services due to this course of action. Now comes the third course of action for dealing with this ethical dilemma. That was to confront the client and inform him about the situation. The positive side of this action is that the client took notice of the information provided to him and stopped the use of marijuana in his house, but the worst part of this action is that the client may have taken this as an offense, asking why we were not doing our job as required and instead interfering in the personal life of the client. It will result in the loss of this client by the agency, and our team will be held accountable for it (Avby, Nilsen & Ellström, 2017).

The framework for ethical decision-making involves training to deal with ethical dilemmas and issues.

There are methods that can be practiced while making the decision. The three courses of action provided earlier need to be analyzed and considered to determine which should be taken so that ethical decision-making falls within the framework. Ethical decision-making is not an easy task when it is a rare case, but an experienced person can handle it efficiently and effectively. Sometimes, decisions can be made by moral intuition, which comes first to mind when thinking about them. But experienced people also advise that what comes to mind first is not always a good option. Decisions that deal with ethics need very strong and deep consideration. To solve the problem, researchers have designed three types of ethical decision-making frameworks so that the person making the decision can understand the consequences both ways, the duty involved according to ethics, and the virtue of taking or not taking the decision (Bogo, 2015).

- The consequential framework for making the decision is the first one in the framework, which helps ensure possible future results after making the decision. The action that is taken can give the best and possibly favored result, but the action also has the possibility of giving the worst consequences.
- The second framework type for decision-making is the duty framework. This framework provides guidance to each and every human being on their moral and ethical duty or obligation when they face an ethical dilemma. The question that needs to be asked is whether the actions being considered fall under a duty in order to find out what guidance this ethical framework provides.
- The third type of framework that comes under ethical decision-making is the virtue framework. This framework helps in understanding the perceived reaction by seeing the situation and whether the reaction is positive or negative. Every action that is undertaken by human beings comes from emotions, whether negative or positive, even though they think it's morally right or wrong. Our course of action defines the type of person we are and what we should do in a situation that involves an ethical dilemma.

After going through all the types of ethical frameworks for decision-making, the decision is made using all three types. Applying all three will provide the best possible help because ethical decision-making is not an easy task. First of all, the ethical issue is recognized, which is the use of marijuana in the house of an elderly person who will be affected by it, and it will damage his health. The parties involved were also considered earlier: the client, the boy, the police department, our group, and the organization for which we are working (Arthur, 2015).

The decision that I have considered is to discuss the matter with the client so that he will know what is going on and tell him that the assessment requirement is to stop giving the services. But this decision is guiding me to talk to the senior citizen because, ethically, given the situation, he may not be aware and can take possible action against that young boy. In the meantime, giving a warning also comes under my duties as a social worker. It is my duty to decide in the report, under suitable terms, whether to stop the services or not to stop them. Our group decided to give the warning by explaining the organization's terms and conditions.

Conclusions

In conclusion, an ethical dilemma arises when there is a conflict of moral principles during different stages of life. Working as a social worker, the nature of the job is to provide daily meals to elderly people who are above 60 years old, and the meals are prepared by the senior resource center with the help of a local catering organization. The specific incident was the only one significant enough to become an ethical dilemma during the delivery of food as part of an eligibility assessment. After going through the code of ethics as described by the National Association, especially for social workers, the well-being of the client is the duty of the social worker. There are other laws and rules that also emphasize that all social workers, even common citizens, should always look after the well-being of the people around them, especially senior citizens. Furthermore, the decision could have been made with more consideration, and either of the other two options may have been suitable for the situation.

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